

WILLIAMS, ABRAHAM (Bardd Du Eryri; 1755 - 1828), poet and chair manufacturer

Name: Abraham Williams
Pseudonym: Bardd Du Eryri
Date of birth: 1755
Date of death: 1828
Child: Catrin Williams
Parent: Thomas Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet and chair manufacturer
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Griffith Thomas Roberts

Born at Cwmglas Mawr, Llanberis. His father, Thomas Williams, sent him for a time to the school kept by **John Morgan** (1743 - 1801), curate of Llanberis; **Dafydd Ddu Eryri** was there at the same time. Previous to that there had been two other curates at Llanberis in Abraham Williams's boyhood; they were, **David Ellis** who was there from 1764 to 1767, and **Evan Evans** (Ieuan Fardd) who was there for part of 1771. It was through their influence that Abraham began to take an interest in Welsh prosody. He had a copy of **Siôn Rhydderch**'s grammar which he used to lend to other boys in the school. He went to work at the Penrhyn quarry, and **Gutyn Peris** lodged in his house at Gwaun-y-gwiall, Llanllechid. The two friends quarrelled and in 1791 we find **Gutyn** sending him a *cywydd* seeking a reconciliation; in this he has the line 'you taught me grammar,' which suggests that he was taught by Abraham. In another addressed to **Gwilym Peris Gutyn** says that Abraham Williams taught both of them.

In 1793 Williams sailed for America, landing at Philadelphia, from which he soon made his way to New York, where his wife died of yellow fever. He married a second time, and in 1797 moved to Essex County, New Jersey. Rowland fab Owen, who tried to find out something about his history in America, states on the authority of his daughter, Catrin, that in 1798 he settled at Dorence, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, where he bought land, set up a saw-mill on the river bank, and proceeded to manufacture chairs. Catrin showed Rowland one of the chairs her father had made; the seat was made of hickory strips and she said she had fixed the seats to hundreds of chairs when she was a girl. Rowland fab Owen was of opinion that when he was in Wales Abraham Williams inclined towards the Baptists, but that in America he became a Wesleyan. In 1816 he again moved, this time to Grist Flatts, a place on the west bank of the Susquehanna river, where he set up another similar factory. In 1828 he went to an election meeting held on behalf of Andrew Jackson, who subsequently (1829) became president of the U.S.A., but the journey proved too much for him and he died shortly afterwards. He was buried in a cemetery near his house, and on his tomb-stone was carved: 'Abraham Williams, Died Dec. 27, 1828, Aged 73 yrs. 3 m. 9 dys.' An unfounded rumour that he had died before 1816 drifted to Wales, and **Gutyn Peris** wrote a lament for him in the form of an *awdl* (*Ffrwyth Awen*, 60). Thus, Abraham Williams was privileged to read his own elegy, and in 'Cywydd yr Adfail,' which he sent to Wales 'from the dark forest on the bank of the great Susquehanna river, a long and winding river, May 30, 1819,' we get a reference to the premature elegy and a vivid picture of the poet drawing to the end of his journey after his distant travels.

Author

Griffith Thomas Roberts

Sources

Letters of Rowland fab Owen, 1866-70

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Hanes Methodistiaeth Arfon, iv, 29

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Y Brython, iii, 154

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